TEACHING ENGLISH

VOLUME III *November 1956* NUMBER 4

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EDITORIAL BOARD

F. L. BILLOWS J. G. BRUTON N. E. WILLIAMS

EDITED BY

J. G. BRUTON

British Council, Old Mill Road,
New Delhi 1.

TEACHING ENGLISH is published four times a year
Annual Subscription including postage Rs. 3/-
Advertisement rates on application to the Publishers,
Orient Longmans Private Ltd., 17, Chittaranjan Avenue, Cal. 13

EDITORIAL

BOTH the Prime Minister and the Minister for Education at a Conference of State Ministers of Education, held in Delhi at the beginning of September, 1956, emphasised the important part that English is to play in the sphere of higher education, especially in Science, in India. Their pronouncements on this particular subject echo similar ones made by a number of leading figures in the field of education in this country, and in fact there is general preoccupation in University circles in India regarding the effect falling standards in the knowledge of English are producing on the achievement of students of scientific subjects.

There is good evidence available to prove that in a number of countries where English is definitely a foreign language, it is nevertheless used as the medium of instruction for the teaching of scientific subjects at higher levels. Countries such as Egypt and Japan make considerable use of English in this particular sphere, and even in countries like Indonesia, where traditionally English has not been studied, there are signs that increasing importance is attached to its study and that it will progressively occupy a more and more important place in University studies.

It is, however, not sufficient to devote considerable attention to the teaching of English at the University level, since very obviously standards of achievement here will depend entirely upon the measure of proficiency acquired by students at the High School. If English is not well and efficiently taught in the schools of India, the consequence surely will be that at the University a great deal of time and energy will have to be expended upon elementary study of the English Language, and that the standard of achievement will never be raised very high.

We include in this issue an article by Dr. A. Bose, Head of the English Department, Aligarh University, who, gravely preoccupied with the poor performance in English of students entering the University, has instituted certain remedial measures which have borne some measure of success. Dr. Bose is to be congratulated upon his willingness to experiment, and it is to be hoped that other Universities will copy his example and institute similar experiments. The root of the problem, however, lies in the teaching at High School level and, unless something radical is done to spread knowledge of proper methods to revise syllabuses and text-books, it is not reasonable to hope for any marked improvement among University students.

TEACHING ENGLISH TO UNDERGRADUATES

By Dr. A. Bose

Head of the Department of English, Muslim University, Aligarh

It is curious that the problems of teaching the English language to Indian undergraduates has not yet received adequate attention from educational experts. For instance, the Teachers' Training Colleges of the country have done next to no work on these problems, nor have the State Directorates of Education evinced any notable interest in them. The Boards of Studies of some universities and the English Departments of some colleges are aware of the importance of the problems but there is little evidence yet that the problems are being attacked anywhere in a resolute and planned manner.

And yet, the problems have undoubtedly grown urgent today. Those college teachers of English whose devotion to their mother-tongues and to other Indian languages has not prevented them from believing that a continued study of the English language will be a beneficent force in the nation's education for many years more, must realise more keenly than ever before that the recent pronouncements of the Prime Minister of India and the Central Education Minister at a conference of State Education Ministers have increased the English teacher's responsibility to a considerable degree. It is the responsibility of the English teacher so to devise ways of teaching the language that the knowledge of it can be indubitably useful to all categories of undergraduates, those intending to specialise in the Natural sciences and technologies as well as those studying the Humanities. From the nation's point of view, the justification of continuing the study of a foreign language like English in Indian schools and colleges rests on the graduate's capacity to use the language effectively and correctly. A schoolboy may be forgiven some lapses, not so the graduate.

What are the practical problems of teaching English to the undergraduates that we must consider? This seems to be a question limited in scope and precise in its objective. I have to ask myself as to how best I can, being a college teacher of English, teach my students so that their study of the language becomes worth while. This apparently limited question, like so many other questions in the country today, is bound up with a number of issues some of which are altogether baffling while some others are more than academic in their implications. It would be

unrealistic of the teacher, puzzling over pedagogic problems, to shut his eyes altogether to these wider issues.

The fruitful teaching of a language—a foreign language at that—requires a number of facilities which are not obtainable in India today. The conditions in which elder generations of Indians learnt English, and learnt it well notwithstanding occasional gibes at Baboo English, have changed. Of the changes that have come about, the most important are: (i) the welcome displacement of English from its position as the medium of instruction in other subjects; this displacement is now in force at the secondary level everywhere and at the undergraduate level in several universities; (ii) unmanageably large classes and an unbalanced teacher-pupil ratio; (iii) a crushing load of work on underpaid teachers; (iv) a lack of correspondence between the public examinations and classwork; and (v) a lack of serious purpose among the students which is a part of a wider social malaise. The largeness of classes undoubtedly frustrates conscientious efforts to teach the language effectively. Tutorials and group-discussions cannot be usefully pursued in a college where, for a moderate instance, there may be 500 B.A., B.Sc., B.Comm. students reading English with 6 teachers. In fact, a large number of colleges in India have over 2,000 students on the rolls and quite a few have over 5,000. In most colleges, the correction of written work has grown into a bafflingly colossal task. Oral examinations to test the student's ability to understand spoken English and to speak it himself are not possible in a university where perhaps 10,000 candidates take the degree examination. The paper-setter in crowded examinations, more often than not, has to adjust his questions to the lowest common measure of the candidates' intelligence. The process of valuation too, in spite of safeguards like (or, perhaps, sometimes because of them) Head Examiners, Deputy Head Examiners, examiners' meetings, model answer-books, and Test Instalments, becomes mechanical and quite occasionally unreliable.

Many of these difficulties are very discouraging, yet, with some determination, a few of them can be resolved or at least mitigated. The State can and should re-organize the teacher-pupil ratio for purposes of English teaching (and, for that matter, all language-teaching) in such a manner that useful intensive tutorials become feasible. In large classes, where the teacher cannot reach the students individually, the essential skills can be imparted through the use of lesson-sheets (printed or, preferably, cyclostyled) on which the students do their composition work according to the specifications of the lesson and afterwards make their own corrections according to the instructions of the teacher to the class as a whole. Such lessons have been used in some of the large

American universities and have also been successfully adapted in some places in India. This is not an ideal device but a helpful second best. In teaching pronunciation and intonation and common conversational idioms, linguaphone and B.B.C. records can be used effectively.

There are, however, two other difficulties which are very serious. One relates to the uncertain policy pursued by the State, the universities, and the Boards of Education, regarding the study of English. This uncertainty arises from a number of academic controversies and political attitudes which, while they show that our young democracy is trying to think out its problems, cause a good deal of confusion amongst teachers and students. The other difficulty relates to the competence of the teacher. It is doubtful whether the bulk of college teachers of English today find the teaching of the language a happy pursuit. Teachers who till the other day were required exclusively to teach literature, have found themselves, in the changed circumstances, called upon to teach functional English. For this they had acquired no special training nor, very probably, did they ever give much thought to it. Language teaching is a skill different from literary sensibility. The M.A. or the Ph.D. in English is perhaps an admirable student of English literature but he need not necessarily be a useful teacher of the English language. Even if he speaks and writes good English (as he ought to), he may not be a helpful teacher of the language, just as a poet is not necessarily a reliable interpreter of poetry. College teachers of English today have therefore to learn the skill. It is the responsibility of the various universities and Education Directorates to organise short-term summer schools in which college teachers can acquire that. Apart from the teacher's lack of training, there is another matter, and a disturbing one too. It is possible to find among some college teachers of English a certain air of superiority in regard to language teaching. It is possible that the teacher thinks teaching literature a higher intellectual activity than teaching composition and usage; he is probably compelled by official circumstances to do some composition teaching but his false sense of superiority is bound to weaken his teaching. Obviously, the English teacher has to revise his ideas about his vocation as much for his own good as for society's.

In spite of the difficulties that have been mentioned above (and there are other difficulties too), it is encouraging to find that many college and university teachers of English are applying their minds more and more to the practical problems of teaching the language. The All-India English Teachers' Conference, at its last annual session held in Cuttack, passed a number of important resolutions. The Conference believed that in the three-year degree course,

English should remain a compulsory subject of study, and that the duration of the English course must not be less than two years. This compulsory English, in the opinion of the Conference, should be a uniform course for B.A., B.Comm., and B.Sc. students, and the aims of this uniform course should be :

(a) to train the students to read for comprehension so as to be able to gain facts and ideas from the texts prescribed;
(b) to train the students to express themselves clearly and logically with grammatical correctness;
(c) to give the students the ability at the end of the course to read English with pleasure and profit.

The Conference also appointed a Committee "to consider and suggest details of a course or syllabus for compulsory English for the B.A., B.Sc., and B.Comm. degrees in the three-year degree course." This Committee will submit its report to the next session of the Conference to be held in Dharwar during the Christmas holidays, and all conscientious college teachers of English will look forward to the report.

The educational ideals of the Conference are eminently sensible. Its recommendations (many of which are based largely on the deliberations of another authoritative body viz., the Conference of Professors of English convened by the Central Ministry of Education in 1953) are sound particularly because of the precise practical aims they have set up for English teaching. These practical aims are:

(a) the development of the student's vocabulary, both active and passive;
(b) a training in English idiom and usage;
(c) a training in grammar and syntax.

It is possible to believe that the college teacher of English, if he constantly keeps before himself these practical and modest aims, will be able to achieve positive results in spite of the wider issues and difficulties that interfere with his work. And if the teacher can achieve positive results, the difficulties will disappear or be weaker, and his work will be more and more effective and pleasant.

The teacher cannot however be satisfied with the enunciation of the practical aims. A little thought will show that the fulfilment of the aims involves much patient and laborious work. In fact, the strictly pedagogic work of the teacher begins after the aims of his work have been defined. Consider, for instance, the question of the student's vocabulary. What should be the methods of developing his vocabulary? And what is the amount, what the nature, of the additional vocabulary that has to be conveyed to him? Do we know, or can we find, the quantity and

the quality of the word-stock that the first-year Intermediate student (or the pre-university course student) should have at his disposal? On what foundation are we building up the first-year student's word-stock? It has been said that the High School student should have a stock of 2,500 essential words. Are we agreed on a list of 2,500 words? Have we even a vague total of 5,000 or 6,000 words from which the various Boards of Educations may choose their limits of 2,500? If the first-year student has come up with 2,500 words, how many more words can he assimilate during the two years of his Intermediate course or the three years of the three-year degree course? And how are we to grade these words year by year? Furthermore, are we to impart to all undergraduates the same stock of words or are we to devise different sets of words corresponding to their special academic requirements, some preparing for a study of the Natural sciences and others for the Humanities, and so on? Have we text-books written in conformity to an approved word-stock? These are very practical questions and, to the best of the present writer's knowledge, not yet solved or even tackled. Similarly, the two other parts of the English Conference's recommendations remain to be looked closely into. In regard to English idiom and usage, in regard to English grammar and syntax, on what foundation has the college teacher to begin, and what exactly are the points of usage and idiom, grammar and syntax, that he should teach? Once these questions of vocabulary, idiom, and grammar have been more or less settled, should we not also apply ourselves to devising new methods of testing the students' skill and new methods of valuation?—These are among some of the many practical problems confronting the college teacher of English in India today.

LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE —A MATTER OF ASSOCIATION

BY A. HORNBY

THERE HAS been much discussion during recent years about methods of teaching English as a foreign language. The terms "Oral Method", "Reading Method", "Direct Method", "Translation Method", "Natural Method"—and many other terms, some combining two names, as the "Direct-Oral Method"—have been bandied about. The truth is that these terms are often used with no clear indication of their meaning. Much confusion still prevails.

This article sets out to describe a Direct-Oral Method. Note

the use of the indefinite article: not *the* Direct-Oral Method, but *a* Direct-Oral Method. There can be no one Direct-Oral Method, because any method must depend upon the skill and experience of the teacher who uses it, and, to a lesser extent, upon the text-books from which the teacher gives his lessons.

The term "Direct-Oral Method" is used here for a method that aims at the formation of direct associations. *Association* is the key to all successful language learning. Every word, phrase and collocation in every language has its associations. Inversion of subject and finite verb in English (e.g. *Is he* for *He is*) is associated with the asking of questions. The use of a present tense finite of *have* with a past participle (e.g. He *has gone*) is associated with present time or present result of activity in the recent past (because *He has gone* indicates that he is *not now* here). Tone, too, has its associations. The falling tone is associated with finality and the rising tone with incompletion.

Let us use the word *symbol* for a word, phrase, collocation, pattern, tense usage or tone. Let us use the word *referent* for what is symbolized—an object (e.g., a chair or horse), a relation in space (as indicated by a preposition or adverb), a relation in time (as indicated by an adverbial of time or by a tense usage), an activity or state (as represented, usually, by a verb or noun), a quality (as represented by an adjective or noun). The language learner has to form the appropriate associations between the symbol and the referent. And these associations must be direct. The symbol must at once call to mind the appropriate referent and the referent must call to mind the appropriate symbol or symbols.

The formation of these direct associations is, however, only the *second* step in the language-learning process. It is the more important step, but it does not come first. The first step is that of identifying the new symbol, coming to know what the symbol stands for. This first step, identification, may be made in various ways, and it is for this first step that the mother tongue may quite legitimately be employed.

One of the numerous statements made by opponents of the Direct Method is the statement that this method forbids the use of the mother tongue in the classroom. This is untrue. The mother tongue may quite legitimately be used for the purpose of identifying new symbols, for discussing structures, for describing (when necessary) the pronunciation, intonation and rhythm of the new language.

Identification of a new symbol may be achieved by ostensive procedures. The learner may be shown an object, or a picture or drawing of that object. An activity may be demonstrated. A relation in space may be demonstrated by pointing, or by placing

objects in various positions. When an ostensive procedure is used for this purpose, the learner's usual reaction is to supply, at once, the word of his mother tongue. If the teacher points to, or holds up, a book, saying "This is a book," children will at once utter, not the new word *book,* but the equivalent for *book* in their mother tongue. Is this a valid argument against the use of the ostensive procedure? No, not at all. It has taken the teacher no more time to hold up the book and give the English word than it would take to give the word in translation. Whenever demonstration can give quick and accurate identification, with no possibility of misunderstanding, it has the advantage of combining the two steps. There is identification of the new symbol. There is the beginning of the process of direct association.

There are hundreds of words and phrases that can successfully be taught in this way. Obviously, if two steps can be combined, it is economical of time and effort. But there are other words for which the ostensive procedure is difficult or impossible, likely to cause misunderstanding, or waste of time, or both. It is possible, by giving ten or fifteen minutes' time to the words, to cause pupils to identify *already, still* and *yet* without using the mother tongue. It seems better, however, to give pupils at once the equivalents of these words in the mother tongue and then, in later lessons, use them repeatedly in suitable contexts so that pupils form the right associations between these words and their meanings. The learner does not "know" these words merely because he has been given equivalents for them in his own language. He "knows" them if he at once sees their meanings when he hears them, or meets them in print, and when he himself is able to use them correctly in appropriate contexts. If, during the two or three months following their introduction, the teacher uses the words when opportunity offers, the pupils will learn them as they ought to learn them—through association. Here are examples :—

"What time is it? It's five to twelve. The lesson is*n't* over *yet.* We still have another five minutes."

"What's the date today? It's the first of March, isn't it? It's *already* getting warm. But the hottest part of the year has*n't* come *yet.*"

This kind of oral work—statement by the teacher, and questions put to and answered by the class—is the important second step, the step in which the right associations are formed by *use.* It is a process that can be described as fusion of symbol and referent, the formation of an indissoluble bond between the new symbol and the referent. The mother tongue was used in the first step. In the second step the mother-tongue equivalent is forced out by repeated *use* of the new symbol, so that it no longer rises to the

surface when the symbol is heard or read, or needed in speaking or writing.

Let us take some examples of how associations are to be formed for tense usage. A useful sequence of tenses for the purpose is the Future of Intention (*going to* and an infinitive), the Present Progressive (or Continuous) Tense, and the Present Perfect Tense. The teacher first states that he is *going to do* something, then that he *is doing* it, and then that he *has done* it. After a large number of examples has been given, with the appropriate activities performed as statements are made, pupils answer questions about activities that the teacher, or a pupil, is going to perform, is performing, and has performed. They come to associate *going to* and an infinitive with intention, the Present Progressive Tense with activity in progress, and the Present Perfect Tense with present result of activity in the recent past. When the teacher, or one of the pupils, says, "I've put my pencil in my pocket," the idea associated with the statement should be clear: "Now the pencil's in my pocket." There is no reason why the teacher should not talk about the new tense in the language of his pupils if he thinks this useful. But it is the practical oral work that is needed to form the direct association between the new tense and what it stands for. It is the practical oral work that will help the learner to understand that when he hears someone say, "*I've had* a good breakfast this morning"—Present Perfect Tense—he is implying that *now* he is not hungry. If he had said, "I had a good breakfast this morning"—Simple Past Tense—the implication might be quite different. Breakfast was, perhaps, three or four hours ago, and the speaker is ready for another meal.

The Direct-Oral Method is called Direct because it aims at the formation of direct associations. It is called Oral because oral work —the rapid exchange of question and answer—is the most effective means, during the beginning stage, of achieving this aim. Oral work is, if properly carried out, fast. It is many times faster than written work. It gives the learner—again, if effectively carried out—no time for mental translation. Reading has its value, but reading is usually a slow process. Because it is slow there is *time* for mental translation. Mental translation hinders the formation of the direct association that is essential to success.

Let us go on from vocabulary and tense usage to other problems. A word such as *triangle* is "known" as soon as the learner acquires its meaning. Words such as *give, show* and *lend* are not "known" until the learner is familiar with, and able to use without hesitation or conscious reflexion, the patterns in which they are used. These are verbs that may have two objects, usually called the Direct Object and the Indirect Object. We say, "Give

(show, lend) me your book." We say, "Give (show, lend) your book to the boy sitting behind you." In the first sentence the pattern is: Verb, Indirect Object, Direct Object. In the second, it is, Verb, Direct Object, *to,* Indirect Object. How is the learner to know which of these two patterns to use? The teacher may, of course, give an explanation. He may say that the longer (or, more correctly, the phonetically heavier) object usually comes last. "Give me your book" is preferable to "Give your book to me," unless, in order to give prominence to *me,* this word is uttered with a strong stress and falling tone. Such an explanation, given in the mother tongue, may be helpful. But the pupil is not, by this means, learning the English language; he is learning *about* it. Formal grammar seldom helps the learner to *use* a language. It is only by means of exercises that the learner will come to associate pattern and usage. Here, probably, written exercises are preferable to oral work. Conversion of sentences in pattern one (with a short object such as *me*) to sentences in pattern two (with a long object such as *the boy sitting behind you*) is the device needed here. A good text-book would provide exercises of this type. If the text-book used does not provide the right kind of exercise, a good teacher should not find it difficult to compose suitable exercises for the purpose.

English prepositional usage is often referred to as one of the major difficulties of the foreign learner. Here, again, the answer is association. The pupil must not learn words in isolation. He must learn *rely* and *depend* with *upon, succeed* with *in, belong* with *to, afraid* with *of* (and also with *that,* and with *to* and an infinitive), *duty* with *on* and *off* (as in "to go *on duty*" and "to come *off duty*"), *reason* with *for.* He must associate the verb, adjective or noun with the preposition that normally accompanies it. He will form the right associations first by hearing and seeing examples (in sentences, not in phrases), and strengthen these associations by using the words together in sentences. Oral and written exercises are the most effective means. Learning by heart is a poor substitute for learning through use.

Does this insistence on the value and importance of oral work mean that reading is unimportant? No, not at all. Reading, especially extensive and rapid reading, is of great value during the later stages of the language course. It is by extensive reading that we enlarge our knowledge of vocabulary already acquired. Extensive reading helps to add to the associations that should grow up around the words we learn.

There are many words that cannot be learnt at one go. A child in Sind, when he first meets the English word *canal,* will almost certainly associate it with irrigation, for irrigation is the

chief purpose to which canals are put in this area; though the Madras child will think of the Buckingham canal and the boats moving slowly along it. An English child, however, has quite different associations with the word. He probably thinks of a canal as an outdated means of transport. He associates *canal* with inland waterways linking different parts of the country, climbing, by means of locks over watersheds, passing through peaceful green fields and used by long, narrow boats chugging along with oil engines, or pulled by horses plodding along a tow-path. This is a simple example. A more difficult word is *wood.* An Indian child may be told by his teacher that a wood is a small area of land with growing trees. If he is to understand properly the full significance of the word in English literature, he must build up (over a period of years, probably), a whole cluster of associations that are alien to his own environment. The English child associates the word *wood* with the wild flowers he has seen in woods: primroses, cowslips, foxgloves, bluebells. He thinks of the birds and animals he has seen and heard in woods: blackbirds, thrushes, pigeons and nightingales, rabbits, squirrels, badgers, and perhaps an occasional fox.

There are many hundreds of words which, like *canal* and *wood*, are not fully known until we have met them repeatedly in varied contexts. Each time we meet one of these words we add to the cluster of associations that should surround it. So wide reading is important to the learner. It would be wrong, however, to require the learner to read long and difficult books while he is still, let us say, in the first four or five years of his English studies. To require this would be to discourage him. Let the beginner read rapidly as many as possible of those abridged and simplified texts which are now available in such large numbers.

Before we leave this principle of association between symbol and referent, let us consider intonation. One example must be enough.

The English equivalent of the French *n'est-ce pas* is what is often called the question tag, a phrase that is made up of a finite verb (one of the 24 finites that can be combined with *not*) and a personal pronoun, or introductory *there*. How are pupils to learn the appropriate tone to be used on the finite verb in such tags? We can give rules: a falling tone if no answer is expected or needed (because the speaker is stating what is obvious, or something of which he is quite confident), and a rising tone if either confirmation or correction is invited. Rules alone, however, will not enable the learner to use the appropriate tone when he adds a question tag to a statement. He must hear scores of

examples, until he comes to associate the tone with its significance.

Here, obviously, oral demonstration is the only possible procedure. Let the teacher give examples, not as a set lesson, but occasionally, throughout the year. He may, for example, as he prepares to call the register, say, "Today's Monday, isn't it?" Because he is stating the obvious, he will use a falling tone on the verb in the tag. He may then say, "Gopal is still away, isn't he?" This time he will look up from the register, and use a rising tone in the tag. The class will quickly realise that an answer is expected. ("Yes, he is," or perhaps Gopal has recovered from his illness and will say, "No, Sir, I'm here.") Such examples, given from time to time during term, will be far more effective than a statement of the rules. "There are two l's in traveller, aren't there?", with a falling tone in the tag, is a statement. With a rising tone, it is more than a statement. It is an invitation to the pupil who has misspelt the word to acknowledge his error.

A common misconception is that when the learner has been told a linguistic fact (the meaning of a word, a pattern in which a word is used), he "knows" that fact. It is essential for the learner to make use of what is presented to him by the teacher. This is why, in the preceding paragraphs, suggestions have been made for frequent revision. If a word or group of words (as *yet, already* and *still*), or a tone pattern (as the tones in tag-questions) is important, the word or the tone must come into subsequent lessons, again and again, until it is thoroughly familiar. The teacher must, of course, be able to discriminate. He must understand what is important and what is unimportant. (Unimportant words may occur in reading-texts because they are needed for that text. If, a week later, they are forgotten, neither teacher nor pupil need worry.)

The procedures here described are unfamiliar, probably, to the teacher who has, for many years past, concentrated on the reading approach. They are not, however, procedures that the average intelligent teacher will find impossible or even difficult to adopt. Refresher courses for teachers are held frequently in India, and at those it should be a simple matter to explain the chief classroom procedures and devices that are necessary. To those students who are still training to be the teachers of the future, it is much easier to give advice. They, unlike the older teachers, can learn to use new methods from the start.

Young learners do not need a large number of rules. They do not need much formal grammar. It is the teacher, not the learner who must learn *about* the language. The teacher's

knowledge of the language must be good. But what he knows *about* the language is not necessarily to be passed on to the learner. The teacher's knowledge of grammar, phonetics and intonation is a tool that will enable him to help his pupils to learn more effectively. The teacher should know where to find the information he needs, where to find answers to questions of structure or pattern, stress or intonation. He should also know how to guide his class so that the pupils, in time, do most of their work with the minimum of help. The tradition, in some countries, that education is a matter of learning by rote, is an unfortunate one. In language learning it is particularly unfortunate. No language is acquired by learning rules, and lists of words, by heart. A language is learnt by using it, by using it so extensively that the right associations become so firmly fixed, so fused, that conscious thought about pattern, structure, tone, and other elements is no longer needed.

Does this seem an ideal too remote from possible achievement? Those teachers who have been satisfied with translation, with a monotonous reading aloud as the only form of oral work, may think so. Translation, as was stated at the beginning of this article, is a legitimate *means* for identifying new symbols. It should not be an *end in itself*. We need translators and interpreters, but translation, except for the purpose of identification or for the checking of understanding, is not needed much in the classroom during the beginning stage. Translation is a highly specialized art. It is a subject to be taught, by experts, at the end, not at the beginning, of a language course.

POETRY, 4TH FORM

BY F. L. BILLOWS
Education Officer, The British Council, Madras

Gipsy Laddie

BEFORE I begin to teach this poem I usually spend a little while talking to the class about gipsies, wandering people in general, people who leave home because they want to get away from trouble or responsibility; and, in doing so, I try to draw from members of the class their own experience along this line, so that their thoughts are directed to problems of loyalty and responsibility and wishes or efforts to evade them that are within their own reach, or that they can identify themselves with. During this discussion I do not refer to the poem or tell them

It was late in the night when the squire came home
Enquiring for his lady;
The servant made a sure reply :
She's gone with the gipsum Davy.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

O go catch up my milk-white steed,
The black one's not so speedy;
I'll ride all night till broad daylight
Or overtake my lady.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

He rode and he rode till he came to the town,
He rode till he came to Badley;
The tears came rolling down his cheeks,
and then he spied his lady
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

It's come go back, my dearest dear,
Come go back, my honey:
It's come go back, my dearest dear,
and you never shall lack for money.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

I won't go back, my dearest dear,
I won't go back, my honey;
I wouldn't give a kiss from gipsum's lips
For you and all your money.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

It's go pull off those snow-white gloves,
amade of Spanish leather,
and give to me your lily-white hand,
and bid farewell for ever.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

It's she pulled off those snow-white gloves
amade of Spanish leather
and gave to him her lily-white hand
and bade farewell for ever.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

She soon ran through her gay clothing,
Her velvet shoes and stockings;
The gold ring off her finger's gone
and the gold plate off her bosom.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

O once I had a house and land,
a feather bed and money;
But now I've come to an old straw pad
and the gipsies dancing round me.
Rattle-tum a gipsum, gipsum;
Rattle-tum a gipsum Davy.

to look out for parallels in it, but leave that to be done by them individually, as they think about the poem and its significance for them, after they have learnt it. At this stage I only want to set them thinking perceptively and give them an opportunity to discuss their own experience, but I also use it as an opportunity to introduce and familiarise any unfamiliar expressions such as "you never shall want for money; he'll never want for money; the son of a rajah need never want for money, he can always join the board of a company as a director," etc. Expressions such as "milk-white", "lily-white", "snow-white", "broad daylight" etc. may be left to the poem itself to teach.

I used to explain the meaning of the word squire, as a rich man who had a big house and land, a sort of zamindar, until a training college lecturer took me to task for not explaining the word in greater detail with a history of the historical position of the mediaeval squire in relation to the knight and the development of the landed gentry. This set me thinking about the sort of information we teachers usually pour over the overburdened heads of our pupils and I asked myself whether it was really necessary to tell the class that a squire is a rich man with a house and land—all he needs to know for the understanding and enjoyment of this poem—or whether it would not be possible for the pupils to find out that much for themselves from the poem. So I tell them nothing and, instead, post a boy at the blackboard with instructions to note down and number each new fact about the squire as we come to it in the poem. The class helps by drawing attention to what he has missed, and thus a far greater and more general degree of concentration on the meaning of the poem is achieved. When we get to the word "his", in the second line, for instance, the boy should write: 1. a man; and, as we finish the line, he writes beneath it: 2. He has a wife, he is a

married man. Then I refer to the first line, repeating it several times, if necessary, until someone discovers that he has come back late at night and just possibly has a habit of doing so, the sort of habit that might explain why a wife would run away and leave him, though it would not excuse her. At the word "servant", another point would be recorded: 4. He has a servant, and is perhaps a rich man. Point 5 would probably be "He has at least two, and possibly more, horses," and so on. The list need not be closed with the end of the first lesson on the poem, other less obvious qualities in the squire may be noted in subsequent lessons, such as "He must be a very strong, active man because, after returning home late at night he was able to get on his horse immediately and ride all night to find his wife," and "He must be a patient and forgiving man, because he didn't blame her or threaten her at all, but simply asked her to come back." This might be disputed by some members of the class and his behaviour ascribed only to cowardice, but a discussion of the point would be fruitful, and both viewpoints could be recorded on the blackboard. But all this would follow the first reading of the poem.

When the preliminary discussion—which may or may not refer directly to the story outlined in the poem, but should on no account include a summary of it—has been brought to a useful conclusion and has yielded enough practice of the unfamiliar language forms, I read or recite the poem clearly and at a normal speaking speed, right through from beginning to end. The pupils' books should be shut if the poem is in them; they must concentrate absolutely on the spoken word without any distraction from the eyes and the possibly misleading impressions they might derive through them. A second reading, in which the pupils are asked to repeat the two lines of chorus at the end of each verse may also be made, as this will help to concentrate their attention on what is being read, but it is not necessary, and, with or without it, I then proceed to a slow, or line by line reading of the poem.

As with the squire, I ask myself before I explain each word whether an explanation is really necessary or whether the pupil may not rather be expected to get the meaning himself by attentive reading or listening, so I may prefer to ask a question and repeat the line several times in which the answer may be found; for example, to familiarise the word "speedy", I ask: "Which of the squire's horses was the faster?" and then read "O go catch up my milk-white steed, the black one's not so speedy, I'll ride all night till broad daylight or overtake my lady." Although there is no exact explanation of the word "speedy" to be found in these lines, common sense will help us to infer its meaning from them,

and the meaning should not be given until an attempt has been made on these lines. Or the word tears may not be known, so I ask "What came rolling down his cheeks?" running the points of my fingers down from my eyes over my cheeks, and possibly simulating weeping—though that is not necessary—and getting the answer "tears" as yet perhaps not fully comprehended. Then I ask when tears come rolling down their cheeks and give, if necessary, the answer: "When I am very sad, or when I peel an onion." These answers too need not be fully comprehended at first, but will be if they are repeated in relation to enough well-recognized situations.

And as I read the poem through verse by verse, repeating the lines and phrases a great many times over, not spending any time on words of secondary importance, but leaving them for bringing to full consciousness in subsequent readings of the poem and when they are familiar in their particular contacts, with most fourth forms the poem can be presented to this degree in one lesson of 45 minutes and the text may have been read with the books open once, though I would prefer them to read it silently alone for home work. Then in subsequent lessons ten minutes here or a quarter of an hour there will suffice to make it perfectly familiar, the class saying the chorus all together until they know the verses well enough to say them too.

After the poem has become thoroughly familiar, a return may be made to the original preliminary discussion of the problem, and peculiarities of expression such as "You never shall lack for money" may be discussed. It may then be dramatized or read aloud and mimed, or re-written as a puppet play, or as a short story with other characters with names familiar to the pupils. There is almost no end to what may be done with it, but every attempt to realize it apart from the words of the poem itself should be followed by a reading or recitation of the poem as it stands.

HANDWRITING IN SCHOOLS

(*Continued*)

BY K. V. THIRUVENKATACHARI

THE ADVANTAGES of "legibility with speed" in everyday life need not be enumerated here as everyone knows them. One can come across several instances of people who are diametrically opposite, one type having a legible hand without speed while the other good speed without adequate legibility. What a pity both are not wanted in offices, in the business world or for any kind of work which involves much writing. Even in schools we can find these two

types. In addition, we can come across another type who cannot finish writing within a limit of time even though they know the correct answers. The main reason for this is lack of adequate training being given to pupils to write with speed and accuracy along with legibility.

Which is the right stage then for introducing the development of speed in handwriting? The writer has bestowed much thought on this problem and has come to the conclusion that it could be introduced with advantage some time after the attainment of the thorough mastery of the joining of letters by the pupils. He introduced the element of speed in the third year of study when the generality of the pupils in the class had thoroughly mastered this art of joining neatly and legibly. Besides the usual daily transcription work, he conducted speed tests systematically every week right from the beginning of the year and recorded the results in the following tabular form :—

DURATION OF TEST—5 Minutes.

Sl. No.	Name of pupil	No. of mistakes	Speed per minute in letters	Marks out of max. 15	Remarks
1.	....	..	..	..	Normal
2.	....	..	..	..	A little faster
3.	....	..	..	..	Not neat
4.	....	..	..	..	Shaky
5.	....	..	..	..	Much faster

Mean : . . . .letters per minute. Median : . . . .letters per minute.

It was felt that the speed test should not be long at this early stage. So it was conducted for only 5 minutes. The pupils are apt to feel nervous and commit a lot of mistakes at this early stage since this kind of test is quite alien to them. First they must be made to get familiar with the test. With this end in view the passages were carefully selected from those lessons the pupils were already familiar with, *through both reading and writing.* Such passages were given for a couple of months. During this period it was noticed that the pupils shed their nervousness by and by and got acquainted with the method of taking part in this kind of test. For the next stage slightly more difficult passages were selected. Passages that were familiar to the pupils *through reading only* were given for another couple of months and the results recorded. During the final stage still more difficult

passages were chosen and administered. These passages were well *within the structures the pupils had already learnt in the class but were not taught in the class in a detailed manner.* They were selected from the books intended only for comprehension. It should be noted that on all these occasions the announcement of the passage was made only on the eve of the test; for, if the passages were announced far in advance, the pupils would try to get them by heart and show higher rate of speed than their own normal ones. Thus the chance of exhibiting abnormal speed was completely eliminated right from the beginning.

Recording the results of the speed test in a tabular form of the above kind would certainly help the teacher a great deal like a barometer in understanding the different levels of the pupils. One could come across the following types of pupils possessing :—

1. high speed with both legibility and accuracy;
2. high speed with poor legibility and accuracy;
3. average speed with high legibility and accuracy;
4. average speed with poor legibility and accuracy;
5. low speed with high legibility and accuracy; and
6. low speed with poor legibility and accuracy.

It should be the endeavour of the teacher to find out the exact causes influencing speed, legibility or accuracy in the transcription work of the pupils. The causes for a particular defect might sometimes be different for different pupils on a particular occasion or might be different for the same pupil on different occasions. At the same time boys at the topmost level should not be overlooked simply because they are at the top. While these boys can be encouraged to go ahead without much guidance, the teacher must study the individual causes of those pupils whose progress is far from satisfactory by going round the class actually during the test and watching their postures of sitting and holding the books and pens, etc. and the position of the ink-bottle, etc., and immediately afterwards offering individual guidance thereon. If such guidance be given even at the commencement of the test, it would do immense good to the pupils by clearing away the obstacles in the way of improvement.

The writer has done this study-work very regularly and systematically all through the year and has evolved a simple chart offering necessary guidance. This served as a remembrancer of the difficulties one would naturally experience in the way of attaining speed along with legibility and accuracy. The following points offering guidance for promotion of *speed with both legibility and accuracy* were written on a thick cardboard and kept hanging in the class permanently, a few of them illustrated.

Promotion of Speed in Transcription Work

Guidance to Pupils

1. See that your pen is neither too thin nor too thick to hold.
2. Never use a sharp pointed nib.
3. Do not hold your pen too near the nib.
4. Do not hold your pen too tight or too loose.
5. Before you start writing, examine your nib and see whether it writes well.
6. Use a note-book with smooth paper.
7. Do not slant the note-book from its normal positions; always keep it straight in front of you.
8. Keep straight the matter to be copied in front of you on the left side and not too close to the note-book.
9. Turn on to the next page as quickly as possible.
10. See that you have enough good ink in your bottle to dip your pen well.
11. Always keep your ink-bottle at the top right-hand of your note-book.
12. Do not spill ink on your paper or strike out words awkwardly when you make a mistake; strike out, if necessary, within the least time.
13. Do not move your lips and read the matter to be copied.
14. Catch quickly as many words as possible while you look at the matter to be copied.
15. Do not think that you are taking a test when you start writing.
16. Do not turn this side or that side when you have begun to write till you finish the work.
17. Go on writing in a normal way as you do in daily transcription work.
18. Do not be ambitious to attain the topmost speed too quickly. Develop your speed in the most natural way by resorting to systematic and regular transcription work.
19. Above all *Remember* that *Legibility, Neatness and Accuracy* are *Equally Important* as *Speed.*

Ever since this chart was evolved, the pupils were trained to study carefully the guidance thereon and set right their own defects by resorting to remedial measures. The group leaders also helped the pupils of their own respective groups by offering guidance. In fact, at the start of every "speed test" class these leaders could be seen buzzing about examining the pupils' tools for writing, such as pen, ink, note-book, etc., as well as their postures of sitting and

writing, and offering guidance. If they come across any obstacles in the way of promotion of speed, they immediately bring them to the notice of the teacher and set them right. Thus an atmosphere congenial for increasing the speed of writing along with legibility and accuracy was created in the class.

(*To be continued*)

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Leon Boucher: Let's Play a Game (Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, 1956).

Word-games are a very useful way of stimulating interest and of teaching unobtrusively in a foreign language, and this small book describes 22 games which offer opportunities for practising the words and skills learned by students of English as a foreign language.

Peter Strevens: Spoken Language (Longmans Green & Co., London, 1956).

Paul Christophersen: An English Phonetics Course (Longmans Green & Co., London, 1956).

One of the areas in the world where most attention is currently being paid to the teaching of English as a foreign language is undoubtedly West Africa. As a result of experience gained there, a steady stream of useful material for the teacher has begun to flow from British publishing houses; the two books under review are a part of this stream.

"Spoken Language" is a very straightforward presentation of the many problems faced by both teachers and students in coping with the difficulties of the spoken forms of English. Naturally the author deals with these problems from the point of view of the African teacher and student, but this fact certainly affects the book's general usefulness to a very minor degree.

Professor Christophersen would not, I am sure, make any claim for great originality in his book on English Phonetics, which offers a very clear and concise account of the subject. The author has, however, approached the subject from the specific point of view of the African student and offers him very sound advice on ways of overcoming the particular difficulties he finds in achieving an acceptable pronunciation of English.

Both books contain excellent bibliographies and each is furnished with a useful index.

English Language Teaching: Vol. X. No. 4 (Published for the British Council by Longmans Green & Co., Ltd.).

The contents of this issue are:—

P. Strevens: Choosing a Model of Pronunciation.
J. G. Bruton: The Verb "HAVE".
A. Weinberger: An Experimental Reading Course of Scientific English.
J. A. Bright: Reading or Writing First? M. West: The Gap.
The Question Box. Book Reviews.

QUESTION BOX

Question (a) I want that you tell him.
(b) I want you to tell him.
Which of these is better?

There is no question of one being better than the other, since (b) is correct and (a) is not. The verb "want" is never followed by a noun clause but must normally precede either

(a) an infinitive—I want to go.
(b) a noun—He wants a book.
(c) an accusative and infinitive—I want you to tell him.

Mistakes in structures of this kind are one of the inevitable consequences of using translation as a teaching method—the rendering of the form and structures of the native language in the words of a foreign language.

Question. *Should a teacher accept* American spelling, such as labor, theater, and so on.

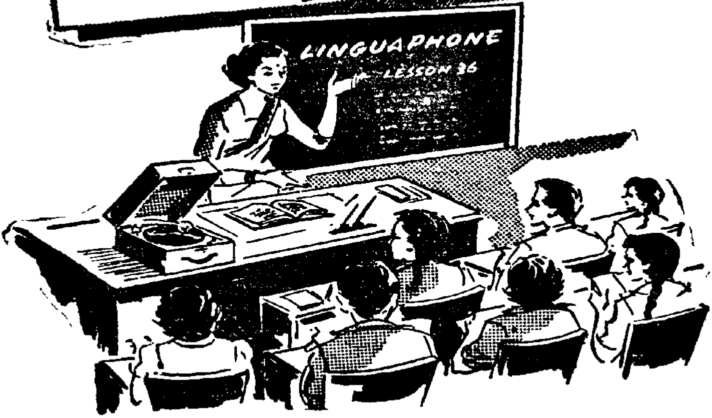
American variants of this type are accepted in the Certificate of Proficiency in English Examination of Cambridge University, and there is no good reason why a teacher in India should not accept them so long as students use them consistently.

Question. What is the correct construction to use with the verb "to avail"?

In its usual meaning of "to take advantage of" the verb "to avail" should always be followed by a reflexive pronoun—"We availed *ourselves* of the opportunity to visit Agra." An important feature of this verb is that it cannot be used in the passive—we cannot say "The opportunity was availed of.........."

NOTE :—In the August issue, vide "Why a Syllabus?" p 70, please read Professor L. A. Hill's designation as *Professor of English Language, University of Indonesia.*

first you listen



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